



Did you know that January is peak flu season or that approximately 26,000 people a year die from the flu? In this month's issue of ACOOP News, we will learn how to recognize flu symptoms and learn how to prevent the flu from getting you down.

## Influenza Symptoms

Influenza (commonly called the "flu") is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. The information below describes common flu symptoms, how to protect yourself and those close to you from getting the flu, and what to do if you get sick with flu-like symptoms.

## Be Aware of Common Flu Symptoms

Influenza usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

## Diagnosing the Flu

It is very difficult to distinguish the flu from other infections on the basis of symptoms alone. A doctor's exam may be needed to tell whether you have developed the flu or a complication of the flu. There are tests that can determine if you have the flu as long as you are tested within the first 2 or 3 days of illness.

If you develop flu-like symptoms and are concerned about your illness, especially if you are at high risk for complications of the flu, you should consult your healthcare provider. Those at high risk for complications include **people 65 years or older, people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children.**

## Know the Risks from the Flu

In some people, the flu can cause serious complications, including bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes. Children and adults may develop sinus problems and ear infections.

## People May Have Different Reactions to the Flu

The flu can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Although most healthy people recover from the flu without complications, some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious complications from the flu.

## Know How the Flu Spreads

The flu usually spreads from person to person in respiratory droplets when people who are infected cough or sneeze. People occasionally may become infected by touching something with influenza virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.

Healthy adults may be able to infect others **1 day before** getting symptoms and up to **5 days after** getting sick. Therefore, it is possible to give someone the flu before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick.

## Best Protection against the Flu: Vaccination

The single best way to protect yourself and others against influenza is to get a flu vaccination each year. Two kinds of flu vaccine are available in the United States:

- **The "flu shot"** — an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease). See also [Questions & Answers: Seasonal Flu Shot](#).
- **The nasal-spray flu vaccine** — a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "live attenuated influenza vaccine" or FluMist®). LAIV (FluMist®) is approved for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September or as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, into December, January, and beyond. This is because the timing and duration of influenza seasons vary. While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or later.

Above Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms.htm>

## How Germs Spread

Illnesses like the flu (influenza) and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu and colds usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

# How to Help Stop the Spread of Germs

Take care to:

Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough

Clean your hands often

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth

Stay home when you are sick and check with a health care provider when needed

Practice other good health habits.

## Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough

**Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away.** Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

## Clean your hands often

**When available, wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- then rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces.** Wash for 15 to 20 seconds. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.

**When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used.** You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using a gel, rub the gel in your hands until they are dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in the gel kills germs that cause colds and the flu.\*

\*Source: FDA/CFSAN Food Safety A to Z Reference Guide, September 2001: [Handwashing](#).

## Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth

**Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs can live for a long time (some can live for 2 hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, and tables.

**Stay home when you are sick and check with a health care provider when needed**

Above Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/work.htm>

# Training Available for January & February 2009

## **New User Training**

*Learn the components of building continuity of operations plans and how to use the Living Disaster Recovery Planning System (LDRPS).*

February 3, 2009 8:30-12:00

## **Pandemic Flu – facts, planning, & exercises**

*A good class for planners & staff! Learn about the types of flu, why pandemic flu is a threat, and how we can prepare.*

January 28, 2009 8:30-12:00

February 25, 2009 8:30-12:00

## **COOP Refresher**

*Maybe it has been a while since you worked with your plan or you just have questions about COOP, bring them and catch up on your planning.*

February 12, 2008 8:30-12:00

## **Workshops**

*Need an afternoon to work on your COOP with some guidance? Workshops are held after every class session in the DIS training room.*

January 28, 2009 1:00-4:00

February 3, 2009 1:00-4:00

February 12, 2009 1:00-4:00

February 25, 2009 1:00-4:00

For more ACOOP information, visit our website at <http://dis.arkansas.gov/security/coop.htm>